

September 25 is Family Health & Fitness Day USA

Fresh & Healthy

Ask the Health Coach

September is Cholesterol Awareness Month

It's September – *Let's get physical!*

September 25 is *Family Health & Fitness Day USA* and September 29 is *National Women's Health & Fitness Day*, making this a perfect time to focus on ways to increase your physical activity and improve your overall health and wellness.

But how much activity do you need to reap the health benefits? The US Department of Health and Human Services has issued guidelines to help us answer this question.

How much is enough?

Every one of us can receive substantial health benefits when we engage in regular physical activity. The table below outlines the different stages of activity and describes the health benefits of each.

Stage	Amount of Activity	Health Benefits
 <p>No Activity</p>	No physical activity beyond the usual light or sedentary activities of daily living (i.e. walking to and from the car, walking around the house, preparing food, doing laundry, sitting at a computer, etc.)	No significant benefits
 <p>Stage One</p>	Any one the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 minutes per day of moderate intensity aerobic activity • 10 minutes per day of vigorous intensity aerobic activity • 20 minutes per day of a combination of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity 	Lowers risk for premature death, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and depression
 <p>Stage Two</p>	Any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 minutes per day of moderate intensity aerobic activity • 25 minutes per day of vigorous intensity aerobic activity • 30 minutes per day of a combination of moderate and vigorous aerobic activity 	Substantially lowers risk for premature death, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and depression

What is the difference in “moderate” and “vigorous” activity?

You can evaluate your exercise intensity by using either the Perceived Exertion Scale or the Talk Test. In the first method, consider a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 is sitting (or no required effort) and 10 is the hardest possible effort. On the Perceived Exertion Scale, moderate activity is considered a 5 or 6, where vigorous activity is a 7 or higher.

Using the Talk Test, the general rule of thumb is that moderate activity allows you to talk, but not sing; whereas vigorous activity makes it difficult to say more than a few words without taking a breath.

For the average person, **moderate intensity** activities may include:

- Water aerobics
- Bicycling slower than 10 mph
- Doubles tennis
- Ballroom dancing
- General gardening
- Walking briskly (3 mph or faster but not race walking)

Vigorous intensity activities may include:

- Race walking
- Jogging
- Running
- Swimming laps
- Singles tennis
- Aerobics
- Cycling 10 mph or faster
- Jumping rope
- Heavy gardening
- Hiking uphill or with a backpack

It's important to remember that exercise intensity may be moderate for one person and vigorous for another, depending on individual fitness levels. Also, keep in mind that these are just examples and that there are many other ways to increase your physical activity.

What about strength training and stretching?

In addition to regular physical activity, it's recommended that adults engage in some form of strength training, like lifting weights, at least twice a week.

Using the appropriate amount of weight, one set of 8 to 12 repetitions for each major muscle group is adequate, although two to three sets may be more effective. You'll know you're using the appropriate weight if by the end of the set, doing another repetition would seem difficult without help. Instead of using weights, resistance bands may be a sufficient alternative.

Note that muscle-strengthening activities could also count as physical activity if you do them with a moderate to high intensity level and include all of the major muscles (legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders and arms).

Flexibility is an important aspect of physical fitness and stretching is a good way to maintain or increase flexibility. While stretching should be included in your overall physical activity plan, it does not count toward the aerobic or muscle-strengthening guidelines for physical activity.

Let's get moving!

You should aim to engage in physical activity three or more days a week to achieve optimal health benefits. Condensing all physical activity into one or two days is not as effective.

Make a goal and stick to it:

- If you're not at the *Stage One* activity level outlined in the table on page 1, gradually start meeting this goal with light and moderate intensity activities. Build slowly, adding more time each week or as you feel ready.
- If you're at *Stage One* activity level, start working toward *Stage Two*. Remember, gradually substituting moderate activity with vigorous activity can help you reap the same health benefits – in less time!

Change it up a little! Research indicates that participating in a wide variety of activities is beneficial, most likely because it helps prevent injuries and boredom. Whatever you do, just keep moving for good health!

Please check with your doctor before you start any physical activity program.

www.health.gov/paguidelines

Are you ready to start a new exercise routine?

Our Lifestyle Improvement Program on Exercise can help you achieve your fitness goals. Its graduated phases and steps are designed to help you achieve optimal fitness. You'll have access to an exercise planner and readings that provide practical tips and information about healthy exercise habits. Get started today using this free tool from **WebMD**! Simply log on to **MyBlueService** at www.bcbsfl.com and access the **Living Healthy** tab. Select **My Health Manager from WebMD, Lifestyle Improvement Programs** and then **Exercise**.

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Recipe of the Month

Better-than-Ever Beef Enchiladas

Ingredients

1/2 lb extra-lean ground beef
 1/2 cup green peppers, chopped
 1/2 cup red peppers, chopped
 2 cups chunky salsa, divided
 1 cup 2% milk shredded sharp cheddar cheese, divided
 2 Tbsp light Italian dressing
 8 corn tortillas (6 inch)
 2 Tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped



Preparation

Heat oven to 400°F. Brown meat with the peppers in a large nonstick skillet. Stir in 1 cup of salsa. Simmer for five minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat; stir in 1/2 cup cheese.

Spread 1/4 cup of remaining salsa onto bottom of 13x9-inch baking dish. Brush dressing lightly over both sides of tortillas. Stack four tortillas and wrap in waxed paper. Microwave on HIGH 20 seconds or just until warmed. Spoon 1/3 cup meat mixture down center of each tortilla; roll up. Place, seam-sides down, over salsa in dish. Repeat. Top with remaining salsa.

Cover and bake 20 minutes or until heated through. Top with remaining cheese. Bake, uncovered, two to three minutes, until cheese is melted. Top with cilantro.

Substitution: For an even leaner and more economical meal, substitute all or half of the lean ground beef with cooked, low or no-sodium black beans.

Nutritional information per serving: Makes 4 servings.

Calories: 340; Total fat: 11 g; Saturated fat: 5 g; Cholesterol: 55 mg; Sodium 1310 mg; Carbohydrate: 38 g; Dietary fiber 5 g; Sugars: 6 g; Protein: 23 g; Vitamin A: 25% DV; Vitamin C: 50% DV; Calcium: 50% DV; Iron; 15% DV

Ask the Health Coach

Q Which foods are best for weight-loss?

A The simple answer is none. There are no "magical" foods that speed weight loss.

However, there are certain foods that have a lower calorie content, fill you up faster and keep you full longer, which can help control how often and how much you eat.

Fruits and veggies are low in calories and high in fiber and

water content - so you get full faster and stay full longer.

Cooked whole grains such as oatmeal, brown rice, barley, quinoa, whole grain couscous and even whole wheat pasta can fill you up faster than eating grains like dry cereals and breads because they retain water during the cooking process. Plus, whole grains are an excellent source of fiber (which is stripped away in processed grains like white rice),

making you feel full for a longer period of time.

Beans and other legumes also make great diet food because they are a good source of protein and packed with fiber! Beans served with a whole grain (think red beans and rice) make a very lean meal with complete protein.

Although there are no specific sure-fire weight-loss super foods, you can never go wrong by adopting healthy eating habits!

September is Cholesterol Awareness Month

What is cholesterol?

It may surprise you to know that cholesterol itself is not bad. In fact, cholesterol is an important substance made by our liver to make nutrients, build cells and aid digestion. Because it's also found in many foods, we can easily consume more cholesterol than our bodies need. High levels of cholesterol increase your risk of developing atherosclerosis (hardened arteries), coronary artery disease and other life-threatening complications.

Cholesterol is a fatty, waxy substance that circulates throughout our bloodstream. Like oil and water, cholesterol and blood do not mix, meaning the cholesterol does not dissolve. Instead, it is carried to and from cells in packages called "lipoproteins" which, in large quantities, can build up in artery walls. Some lipids are good and some are bad.

- **LDL (low-density lipoproteins)**, also called "bad cholesterol," is responsible for carrying cholesterol and depositing it throughout the body. An LDL less than 100 mg/dL is optimal.
- **HDL (high-density lipoproteins)**, referred to as "good cholesterol," shuttles the cholesterol back to the liver for recycling so it doesn't build up in the bloodstream. HDL should be greater than 40 for men, and 50 for women.

Together with triglycerides (saturated, polyunsaturated, and monounsaturated fats), these lipids make up your total cholesterol. Your total cholesterol should be less than 200 mg/dL.



Keep your cholesterol in check with WebMD!

Start tracking important numbers like cholesterol by logging on to **MyBlueService** from www.bcbsfl.com. Access the **Living Healthy** tab and select **Track My Health from WebMD**.

Keeping cholesterol in check.

Over 65 million Americans have high cholesterol, and because there are no symptoms, many people don't even know it. If you have high cholesterol, take heart. There are many things you can do to lower your levels and stay healthy.

- **Eat for good health.** Good nutrition starts with a good plan. Adopt a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and poultry (including fish at least twice a week), and low fat dairy products. Avoid saturated and trans fats, which are often found in prepackaged foods.
- **Get moving.** Thirty minutes of moderate-level physical activity on most days of the week can lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol and raise your HDL (good) cholesterol levels. Choose to walk, bike, jog, swim ... even dance!
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Eating right and exercising can help you keep your weight down, which is important for lowering your cholesterol and your risk for heart disease.
- **Practice good habits.** If you smoke, it's time to quit! Smoking injures blood vessel walls and promotes the artery hardening process.

It's recommended that you have your cholesterol checked once every five years after the age of 20. If it's been a while since your last screening, now is a great time talk to your doctor about scheduling this simple blood test. You'll be glad you did!

www.americanheart.org
www.cdc.gov



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